

God has given to us, I know well, the liberty of use, but only so far as necessary; and He has determined that the use should be common. And it is monstrous for one to live in luxury, while many are in want. How much more glorious is it to do good to many, than to live sumptuously! How much wiser to spend money on human beings, than on jewels and gold! How much more useful to acquire decorous friends, than lifeless ornaments! Whom have lands ever benefited so much as conferring favours has? It remains for us, therefore, to do away with this allegation: Who, then, will have the liberty of use?

## **Evangelism from the Periphery:**

### **The Universality of Galilee**

*Orlando E. Costas*

what is necessary, we must seek after what can be most readily procured, bidding a long farewell to these superfluities.

## **La realidad histórica y existencial del advenimiento de Jesucristo**

*Rafael J. Aragón*

For they ought to be adorned within, and show the inner woman beautiful. For in the soul alone are beauty and deformity shown. Wherefore also only the virtuous man is really beautiful and good. And it is laid down as a dogma, that only the beautiful is good. And excellence alone appears through the beautiful.

## **Ethnic Minorities in Ministry:**

### **A Prophetic Vision**

*Leo D. Nieto*

For the excellence of man is righteousness, and temperance, and manliness, and godliness. The beautiful man is, then, temperate, and in a word, good, not he who is rich. But now even the soldiers wish to be decked with gold, not having realised that poetical saying:

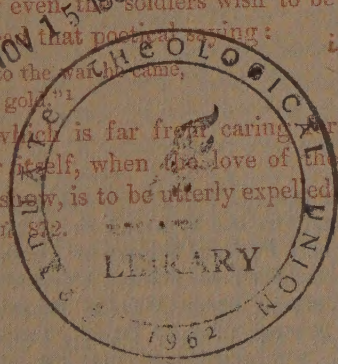
"With childish folly to the war he came,  
Laden with store of gold."<sup>1</sup>

But the love of ornament, which is far from caring for virtue, but claims the body for itself, when the love of the beautiful has changed to empty show, is to be utterly expelled.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 842.

**Reflexiones  
teológicas  
desde  
el  
margen  
hispano**

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**Apuntes** se propone, desde una perspectiva hispana, ofrecer "apuntes" o notas marginales que ayuden a redefinir o reinterpretar la vida y el pensamiento de la iglesia. Pero al mismo tiempo esperamos que esos "apuntes" desde la periferia "apunten" al centro mismo de esa vida y ese pensamiento.

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# Evangelism from the Periphery: The Universality of Galilee

*Orlando E. Costas*

In a previous article we noted the significance of Galilee for Mark's understanding and exposition of the person and work of Jesus Christ. We also noted its correspondence in Paul's Corinthian Christology (cf. I Co. 1:18-31). For Paul as for Mark the Son of God was revealed in a "no-body" (cf. Phil. 2:5-9). This assertion is reinforced by the other Synoptics (for whom Mark was a foundational source), the Fourth Gospel (cf. Jn. 1:14, 43-49), and the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 2:9ff; 4:15; 5:7-8; 12:2; 13:12-13). In arguing thus, the New Testament writers were simply clinging onto, and appropriating, the servant of Yahweh tradition derived from the prophets of Israel, especially the Isaianic prophets. This tradition sees the messianic promises in connection with the sufferings of the servant of Yahweh. The one "who brings good tidings, who publishes peace and salvation" (Is. 52:7) is also the one who "poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors," the same who "bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Is. 53:12b).

Galilee not only has universal validity for New Testament Christology, but also for evangelism. The fact that Mark locates Jesus' proclamation of the good news of the kingdom in the periphery is not simply a reflex of the Evangelist's own context, as some New Testament scholars have argued.<sup>1</sup> Rather the location of Jesus' ministry in the periphery is consequential with the witness of the entire New Testament which sees Jesus as a poor man, who identified with the oppressed and died as one of them to liberate women and men from the power of sin and death, bringing into being the new order of life — of love, justice, freedom and well-being. If the good news is first and foremost for the poor and outcast (Mth. 5:3; 11:406; 25:34; Lk. 6:20b; 7:23; 12:32; Jas. 2:5) and if they are the ones who best understand what its message is all about (Mth. 6:25; I Co. 1:26-28), then it follows that Galilee, as a symbol of the periphery, is also an universal when it comes to the theology of evangelism. In this case, the particularity of the periphery is to inform each and all evangelistic contexts. From this premise, we can draw out three implications from Jesus' Galilean model for contextual evangelism today.

## The Socio-Historical Ground of Evangelism: A Base in the Periphery

First of all, Jesus' Galilean model implies that contextual evangelism should be grounded socio-historically in the periphery. Evangelism presupposes a base; it neither takes place in a vacuum nor originates out of nowhere. A base, however, is not simply the beginning point of an operation, or the place in which it is carried out. It is, especially, a fundamental association rooted in the lowest level or most margined space of society. To say that evangelism should have a base in the periphery is to argue for the popular grass roots as its starting point and fundamental point of reference,<sup>2</sup> which in any society constitutes, by and large, the margined in life and powerless in decision-making.

Only by starting in the periphery, or working from the bottom up, can the good news of God's kingdom be vividly demonstrated and credibly announced as a message of liberation, justice and peace. It is when the gospel makes "somebody" out of the "nobodies" of society, when it restores the self-worth of the margined, when it enables the oppressed to have a reason for hope, when it empowers the poor to struggle and suffer for liberation and peace, that it is truly good news of a new order of life — the saving power of God (Rom. 1:16). When evangelism begins in the center, working from the top down, its content ends up being an easy and cheap accommodation to the vested interests of the powerful and well-to-do. Indeed, evangelism turns out to be reductionistic since it truncates the content of the gospel by making it a privatistic white-wash, manipulated to soothe the conscience of those who by virtue of their "central" position control, economically, socially, politically and culturally, the destiny of the people in the fringes of society. Hence an evangelism that is geared in the first place to the "elite" of society will most likely end up being absorbed by their system.

Evangelism can only be prophetic, and thus liberating, if it has a communal base, a basic witnessing community. Such a base can only be built from the periphery, from outside the centers of power. Since the gospel seeks to set men and women free from all godless, de-humanizing, alienating and, therefore, oppressive forces for the service of God's kingdom of justice and peace, enabling them to live freely and lovingly for God and humankind, it follows that evangelism should be able to challenge and transform such centralized, absolutist



power-systems. The only way it can achieve this end is by building, as Jesus did, a sound base in the periphery, i.e., a community of lame, lepers, blind, poor and ignorant people transformed by the saving power of God's Messiah.

Here we must interject a note of criticism for contextual models of evangelism which concentrate on cultural, linguistic and psychological adaptation and fail to probe into the deeper and wider problem of social, economic and political relationships.<sup>3</sup> Such models may be anthropologically helpful, but they are socially and theologically deficient. For the kingdom of God is an all encompassing, transforming reality. Indeed, it is the power of the new creation (cf. I Co. 4:20; 2 Co. 5:17). An evangelism which is only interested in finding formal equivalences in a given culture or in discovering the felt needs of a people in order to make the gospel culturally, linguistically or psychologically relevant is contextually superficial and prophetically acritical. As a matter of fact, it smacks of a theological cop-out in the face of a planetary reality of evil, under the leadership of demonic principalities and powers which are present in every human situation. Only a prophetically critical and theologically radical contextual approach to evangelism can do justice to the cutting edge of the gospel, namely, its liberating and transforming message to the poor, the powerless and the oppressed and its consequential demand for conversion to their cause, which in turn makes it necessary to have a social base in their peripheric historical situation.

### **The Public Nature of Evangelism:**

#### **Proclaiming the Kingdom amidst the Multitudes**

The contextual evangelistic approach of Jesus and its socio-historical grounding in Galilee implies, secondly, that evangelism is by its very nature public. It not only has a public message (the presence and promise of God's kingdom in Jesus Christ), but takes place amidst the multitudes. The gospel is not simply personal and public. It is rather a public message of ultimate concern for each and all human beings. Nor is the gospel public because it is personal; on the contrary, it is personal because it is public. The good news is for everyone, not for a chosen few. Accordingly, it needs to be proclaimed in the "circles of pagans" that comprise our human mosaic. Wherever there are people that do not have a knowledge of the God whose only Son was revealed in Jesus Christ; where people are trapped in structures of evil and death and are the powerless victims of injustice, suffering oppression and pover-

ty, there the gospel is to be proclaimed, Jesus Christ exalted and the power of the kingdom demonstrated. Because it is there that the majority of human beings are to be found and that there is the most overt need.

Evangelism should be geared to the multitudes because it is the communication of a message which is meant especially for them. It is only in the perspective of the multitude that so-called personal evangelism (one on one) can and does take place. Women and men can be evangelized to the extent that they share in the predicament and vulnerability of the multitudes. Evangelism presupposes the solidarity of all as far as the experience of sin and death is concerned. And it is this reality that best characterizes the multitudes of our world.

Jesus described the multitudes (ochlos) of his day as harrassed and helpless, "like sheep without a shepherd" (Mth. 9:37). That is, they were leaderless, without a goal, uncertain of the future. He evangelized them by announcing the dawning of a new age wherein their burdens would be lifted and their vulnerability be eliminated. He invited them to participate of that new reality by trusting in him (Mth. 11:28ff.).

This is without question the evangelistic challenge that is before Christians today in the face of the multitudes of human beings around the world that find themselves harrassed and helpless, threatened by the material and spiritual reality of sin and death. The fact that we all participate of the vulnerability of the multitudes does not mean that any human group is thereby a multitude in the theological sense in which we have been speaking. The multitudes are defined not by the sum total of individual human beings, but by the social reality of vulnerability. Of course, quantitatively speaking, it is not difficult to determine today who are the multitudes: they are the overwhelming majority of human beings who bear the brunt of injustice, powerlessness, oppression and poverty on planet earth. What qualifies them as multitudes, however, is not their overwhelming quantity, but rather their social condition. Even if they were not the majority, as in the case of oppressed minorities in the North Atlantic, they would still be the concrete referent of human alienation and vulnerability. In their material condition, we see the spiritual reality of sin and death.

To evangelize the multitudes is to announce the glad news of God's action in Jesus Christ to radically change the frail, unjust and death prone patterns of human existence by bringing



into being a new world order. Such an announcement cannot but be public. To keep it private, announcing it to a select few, is to deny the very content of the gospel. Furthermore, it is to keep out of reach its privileged addressees. On the other hand, when the multitudes are evangelized everybody hears about it: the press, government authorities, the business community, the religious leadership, the army, the comfortable and secure individuals who usually remain aloof from the cry of the multitudes. Very often these various institutional and personal groupings become irritated and threatened, joining forces as a sort of "counter-multitude," to quench the hope and aspirations which come to the harrassed multitudes as they hear the gospel and appropriate it by faith in Christ.

This in fact is what happened in the case of the crowds of Jerusalem that called for the crucifixion of Jesus. The Jerusalem establishment became offended and threatened at the way the Galilean multitudes that followed Jesus appropriated the messianic promise (Lk. 19:37ff). Hence when Jesus entered the Holy City amidst the celebration of the Galilean multitudes, spreading their garments and leafy branches and singing praises to God, the Pharisees asked him to rebuke them (Lk. 19:30). A few days later the chief priests, scribes and elders managed to form a counter-crowd based on a socio-religious coalition of those who should not accept a new era of freedom, fraternity and just peace where the uncultured and margined could be on an equal socio-religious footing with the privileged few (Mk. 14:43). It was the counter-crowd of Jerusalem, not the Galileans, who angrily asked Pilate to release Barrabas and crucify Jesus (Mk. 15:8ff; Mth. 27:15ff; Lk. 23:1-5, 13-21; Jn. 19:6-7, 12, 14-16).

Something similar has occurred in Latin America. After centuries of massive popular harrassment and marginalization, the gospel has begun to be preached and lived amidst the displaced multitudes. As a result, the "lame," the "blind," and the "lepers" are appropriating the messianic promises of the new age; the poor are at last receiving good news! Even a significant minority from the privileged sectors of society, including professionals, intellectuals, students, and religious, business and political leaders, have ceased to be scandalized at Jesus' identity with the poor and oppressed! Never before have so many Latin American "pagans" taken so much interest in the gospel, and never before have the powers and principalities that rule the countries of the region been so irritated and threatened. It is no wonder that they have unleashed a brutal

and repressive offensive which has seen literally thousands follow in the path of martyrdom,<sup>4</sup> even as Jesus suffered outside the gates of Jerusalem (Heb. 13:12).

When the multitudes are evangelized the whole creation hears about it! Indeed women, men and children have the opportunity to respond personally and collectively to the gospel and commit their lives to the Galilean Messiah who cast his lot with the wretched of the earth and thus made possible a new future for all.

This explains why it is so important that there be a strong base-community in the periphery. For only by building a strong community of women, men and children from the ochlos (the marginated multitude) can evangelism acquire the necessary credentials and spiritual strength to fulfill its general and specific objectives. Put succinctly, evangelism can only be prophetic, and thus liberating, if it has an engaged, witnessing base, and such a nucleus can only be built from the periphery.

### **The Global Scope of Evangelism: Into the Periphery of the Nations**

In the third place, the contextual model we find in Jesus' Galilean-rooted ministry implies that evangelism has a global scope. The fact that in the Markan narrative Galilee became the launching pad for world evangelism should not be taken lightly. As has been noted, evangelism is not a ghetto affair; it takes place in the open-space of the multitudes. As an apostolic mandate, it can only be fulfilled in a worldwide pilgrimage. Evangelism is the outgrowth of the movement of Jesus' messianic community through the nations, even as New Testament scholars suggest that the Great Commission in Matthew's Gospel should be read: "Going therefore, disciple the nations" (Mth. 28:18ff).

To evangelize is to communicate the good news to the multitudes near and far. No individual Christian, local congregation or denomination can be content simply with evangelizing the multitudes which lie geographically and/or culturally near. They should always seek to extend their evangelistic witness beyond their frontiers. To be evangelistically concerned with just those who are within one's geo-cultural context while remaining aloof with those who lie beyond one's frontiers, is selfish and hypocritical. If the gospel is important for those who are geo-culturally close, it should be equally valuable for those who are afar.



Contextual evangelism should not be limited, therefore, to local situations. Rather it should seek to be global in scope. It should be globally contextual, addressing women and men in their socio-historical reality everywhere on planet earth.

This does not mean, of course, a relativization of the Galilean principle: the perspective from the periphery. If that were the case, we would be wiping out in one stroke everything I have been arguing for in the previous subsections. Indeed it would mean a return to an uncritical and prophetically crippled contextuality.

In insisting that contextual evangelism be global in scope, however, I am building upon all that I have argued heretofore. The global scope of contextuality should be in congruence with the Galilean principle. This means, concretely, that evangelism should be geared, first and foremost, to the periphery of the nations wherein lie the multitudes and where the Christian faith has always had the best opportunity to build a strong base. Whenever the Christian faith has gone straight to the centers of power (as, for example, in those situations of mission history where the first to be evangelized has been the monarch, the head of state or ruling elite), usually it has resulted in a great massification of the faith. The gospel has been cheapened and devalued. Evangelism has become the propaganda arm of the ruling class, focusing on mandatory mass-conversions and losing thereby its critical, prophetic edge.

But when evangelism is done at the periphery of the nations the outcome is, by and large, much different. The critical, liberating thrust of the gospel is bound to come forth in one way or another, because of the similarities in historical situations. Indeed for the poor and the oppressed no "demythologizing" of the gospel is possible. The Christ of the gospel is Jesus of Nazareth, the poor and solitary Galilean who lived a just life and died for the salvation of the world. They have, therefore, no problem in understanding the cross and resurrection in their concrete reality because they have no other historical instruments to mediate the message of Christ than their experiences and situation. At the popular level, the theoretical postulates of religion are relativized. For people who live in the fringes of society, the fundamental theological question is: does religion have a liberating word to say to them? From the perspective of Jesus Christ and the gospel, the answer is affirmative, even if the answer given through the

behavior of Christians and the church in history has often been negative.

This question was vividly articulated in a recent visit I made to Sri Lanka. I participated, together with several colleagues from around the world, in an "immersion exposure" of urban Colombo from the perspective of the "shanty towns" where half of the population live. We saw Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Christians living side by side, suffering and experiencing together the effect of a de-humanized social, economic and political reality, as described in the following local song:

Cardboard and tin cans all straightened out  
Patched up with these and blocked round about  
Everyman's junk we've built up our house  
That's one of many in old shanty town.

A million mosquitoes, we wait for the rain  
To wash away all the dirt filled up drains  
The water we get comes down from the skies  
But the drought's going on and our homes full of flies.

A slum is where the world forgets who you are  
They close their eyes, no time to care  
They pass you by, faces full of frowns  
Turned up noses at our shanty town.

The same song extends a moving invitation:

Come take my hand  
Some time can you give  
To open your heart and see how we live  
Visit my home, I'll take you around  
The Forgotten People of old shanty town.

We visited the "forgotten people of old shanty town" and saw ourselves deeply interrogated from the very heart of the gospel. How is it that the ruling elite can be satisfied with the dehumanization that takes place in these slums? How have religious communities, in general, and Christians, in particular, allowed themselves to be so dehumanized that they can go on to sleep in spite of the millions around them who live and suffer in the shanty towns of the world? We discovered the shanty as a new universal, found almost everywhere in the world, including the Americas. (In the continental United States, for example, the shanty is our urban ghettos; in



Puerto Rico, arrabales; in Central America, tugurios; in Brazil, favelas; in Argentina, villas miserias, and so on.) Most importantly however, we who as seminary and university professors from around the world came there to learn and reflect theologically on the problem and challenges of religious pluralism, left nevertheless feeling that we had been evangelized by the risen Christ hiding in the suffering faces of the residents of "old shanty town."

The shanties are without a doubt a fundamental point of reference in evangelism, being at the same time a disturbing sign of the dehumanizing effect of sin, and a liberating possibility for those who take the gospel sincerely. This experience reconfirmed the conviction, derived by me first of all from the evangelistic praxis of Jesus, that authentic, contextual evangelism should start from the periphery, with an immersion in the pains and agonies of the people in the fringes and bottom of society, and the disturbing effect which such an involvement has upon one's conscience. In such an experience, one encounters the risen Lord, enlarging and deepening one's limited vision of human reality, challenging one's presuppositions, renewing one's mind, liberating and empowering one's life for service as a channel of grace in the "Galilees of the nations" — the shanties and ghettos, the marginal provinces and forgotten nuclei of the world.

If we take Jesus' Galilean evangelistic model seriously, our evangelistic practice will never be the same. For we will be forced to ask, **where** is our base, **who** is our target-audience and **what** is the scope of our evangelistic praxis? And when we start asking such questions in earnest and in the light of Jesus' own ministry, we are challenged to either conform our evangelistic witness to his model or close shop and go home. May we be led to follow in his steps!

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Willi Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969).

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Jose Marins, "Basic Ecclesial Community," *The Community of Believers*, *UISG Bulletin*, No. 55 (Rome, Italy), p. 293.

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Mary-

knoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1979); Edward Dayton and David Frazer, *Planning strategies for World Evangelization* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980); and David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Interpretation to Missionary Communication* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Penny Lernous, *Cry of the People* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1980), pp. 3ff.

## Resumen

Continuando el tema del ensayo anterior, Costas estudia el modo en que ha de entenderse el evangelismo hoy, a la luz del tema de Galilea como elemento fundamental del evangelio. Esto quiere decir que el evangelismo ha de basarse en, y dirigirse primeramente a, las Galileas de hoy. Al hablar de las "multitudes" a quienes hay que predicar el evangelio, esto no ha de entenderse de modo cuantitativo, sino que se refiere a los marginados de hoy, tanto cerca como lejos.

### POSITION AVAILABLE

Perkins School of Theology, at Southern Methodist University, announces its search for a person to teach in the fields of worship and liturgy. This is an appointment on a tenure track, and candidates must hold a Ph.D. degree or its equivalent.

If the person selected is also qualified to teach homiletics, there is a possibility of appointment to the LeVan Chair of Worship and Homiletics.

Inquiries, resúmenes, and letters of reference are to be sent to Prof. H. Neill McFarland, Perkins School of Theology, Dallas, TX 75275, by January first, 1983.

The person should expect to assume this post by September, 1983.

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# La realidad histórica y existencial del advenimiento de Jesucristo

*Rafael J. Aragón*

*El pueblo que andaba en tinieblas vio gran luz; los que moraban en tierra de sombra de muerte, luz resplandeció sobre ellos.*

*Isaías 9:2*

**L**a encarnación y el ministerio de Jesucristo son acontecimiento histórico y realidad existencial. De la misma forma, la actividad que precede a su nacimiento es vista como un proceso histórico que tiene implicaciones existenciales.

El advenimiento de nuestro Señor Jesucristo como proceso histórico emerge en las páginas de la creación durante el diálogo del Creador con Adán, cuando Dios descubre que la humanidad personificada en el hombre Adán y la mujer Eva ha traspasado los límites de su libertad y ha superimpuesto sus deseos sobre la voluntad divina. Es importante notar que fueron Adán y Eva los que se escondieron de la vista de Dios. La separación es creada por iniciativa humana. Es la humanidad quien siente el impulso de escapar, separarse, y alejarse de la presencia divina. Este comportamiento humano es símbolo patético que precipita la necesidad de la venida de Jesucristo.

El primer anuncio del advenimiento de Jesucristo es proclamado en las palabras de Jehová cuando dijo, dirigiéndose a la serpiente, "por cuanto esto hiciste, maldita serás entre las bestias ... maldita sobre todo animal viviente; y pondré enemistad entre ti y la mujer, y entre tu simiente y la simiente suya, y esta te herirá en la cabeza, y tú la herirás en el calcañar." Aquí, Dios promete que la tragedia ocasionada por la desobediencia humana y precipitada por la actividad satánica personificada en la serpiente sería abolida por la simiente (Jesucristo) de la mujer (María).

Sin embargo, después de esta proclamación, el proceso histórico parece caer en un letargo lleno de silencio, tragedia y angustia. La humanidad, creada en gracia, ahora es aprisionada en la miseria producida por la separación con Dios. El primer rayo de luz en esta tragedia emerge cuando Dios escoge a

Israel como su pueblo. Esta nueva realidad establece el escenario para el cumplimiento del proceso histórico del advenimiento de Cristo. Este proceso recibe su impacto cuando la voz profética contenida en el libro de Isaías revela la voluntad divina y proclama acontecimientos por venir que definirían la esencia del advenimiento de Jesucristo. El capítulo 9 de Isaías es una lírica que expresa un nuevo día en las relaciones divino-humanas. "Un niño nos es nacido, un hijo nos es dado, y el principado sobre sus hombros; y llamará su nombre: Admirable, Consejero, Dios fuerte, Padre Eterno, Príncipe de Paz."

Estas palabras de Isaías confrontan a Israel con una esperanza de liberación. Desafortunadamente, Israel no puede hacer la conexión existencial y espiritual del anuncio de la venida del Mesías. Israel no concibe al Mesías como poder divino que iba a relacionar el evento histórico del Jardín del Edén con su liberación espiritual. Por ello es que Israel concibe al Mesías como libertador temporal, visto en términos terrenales y no en términos escatológicos donde el tiempo y el espacio no existen.

El silencio se interrumpe cuando el sacerdote Zacarías, mientras se encontraba quemando incienso en el templo del Señor, recibe la visita del Ángel Gabriel parado a la derecha del altar del incienso (Lucas 1:11). Con esta aparición se abre la serie de acontecimientos que llevan al cumplimiento profético del nacimiento de Jesús. La realidad del advenimiento es iniciada por la acción directa de Dios, quien escoge los eventos, personalidades (Lucas 1:26-37) y el tiempo oportuno que han de ilustrar y activar la dinámica divina para la realización de su propósito reconciliatorio.

La visita angelical a Zacarías es coordinada con la anunciación del nacimiento de Jesucristo meses más tarde a María, con la cual se cumple el anuncio profético de Isaías. El marco histórico del proceso del advenimiento activado en la anunciación se completa con los eventos subsiguientes, que incluyen:

1. La visita del ángel del Señor a José (Mateo 1:20-25).
2. La visita de María a Elizabeth (Lucas 1:30-44), en la cual María recibe de Elizabeth la salutación de, "¡Bendita tú eres entre las mujeres, bendito el fruto de tu vientre!"



3. La respuesta de María, el "Magnificat" (Lucas 1:45-55), en la cual María asume una posición de sierva agradecida por la bondad y misericordia de Dios hacia ella, y por haber sido escogida como el instrumento a través del cual Dios reestablecería su señorío sobre las naciones y pueblos, trayendo nuevamente a su seno aquellos que habían sido marginados de la gracia divina en el Jardín del Edén.

La realidad existencial del advenimiento de Jesucristo a la luz del proceso histórico conlleva una dinámica espiritual. Esta dinámica espiritual tiene implicaciones para el pueblo hispano desde el punto de vista cultural y ambiental.

La naturaleza del alma hispana puede describirse como emotiva, sensible, y con rasgos místicos. Estos tres elementos crean patrones de conducta únicos y característicos del hispano. Al interpretar el mensaje incluiremos estos elementos culturales a fin de que tenga pertinencia. A continuación trataremos de vincular el mensaje con la naturaleza del alma hispana.

El misterio de la encarnación presenta incidentes fascinantes que hacen remontar la imaginación del creyente a un idilio místico lleno de actividad emotiva y apasionante. Los pasajes previamente citados de Isaías, Lucas y Mateo contienen todos los elementos necesarios para alimentar el alma hispana. En un análisis de ellos podemos descubrir:

1. La espera de Israel por el Mesías bien podría identificarse con la urgente necesidad hispana de una redención creadora que emancipe y libre a nuestra raza de las inquietudes, ansiedades y temores engendrados por la incertidumbre de un futuro lleno de oscuridad y tinieblas. Las palabras del profeta, "el pueblo que andaba en tinieblas vio gran luz, y luz resplandeció", pueden resumir nuestro peregrinaje místico hasta el establo de Belén. Peregrinaje que se completa en el acto de amor divino de la encarnación. El advenimiento es el comienzo de una lucha por la liberación de formatos opresivos creados por sistemas humanos, ambientales y culturales.
2. La Visión del pesebre concibe ternura y enfatiza el concepto de la familia como entidad que vincula elementos históricos, tradicionales y condicionales. Estos pasajes establecen las conexiones familiares prevalentes entre María y Elizabeth. La imagen de las dos primas que no solo están relacionadas por los lazos sanguíneos, sino que ahora

han sido unificadas por la actividad del Espíritu de Dios, toca las fibras sensibles de nuestra cultura, que vislumbra la familia como elemento esencial de convivencia.

3. El valor de María de aceptar la voluntad divina, de ser la madre de Jesús, a pesar de las posibles consecuencias ambientales de su época, la coloca en lugar prominente dentro del ambiente cultural hispano. De ahí que la imagen de la Virgen con el niño en sus brazos se ve como el símbolo de la encarnación de Cristo. Símbolo tan poderoso que tiende a colocar a María como el centro de la encarnación, opacando el verdadero propósito de la venida de Jesucristo.
4. La iniciativa divina de reconciliar a la humanidad marginada, no solo con el Creador, sino consigo misma, presenta un desafío a la comunidad hispana cristiana. Este desafío tiene magnitud profética y pastoral. Es profético porque llama a los creyentes en Jesucristo a proclamar y condenar las injusticias y abusos existentes dentro del ámbito de nuestros sistemas gubernamentales y políticos. Es pastoral porque el pesebre anuncia reconciliación por amor. El proceso histórico del advenimiento testimonia una y otra vez del amor de Dios hacia su creación. Por ello la actividad profética ha de ejercerse dentro del contexto pastoral del proceso histórico del advenimiento. Solo así el pueblo que anda en tinieblas puede vislumbrar la luz que resplandece, luz del unigénito del Padre, Jesucristo.

Concluimos, pues, afirmando que el advenimiento de Cristo es una realidad establecida en la cronología histórica de las Escrituras y de Israel, así como una realidad existencial tallada en el alma y sentir de los pueblos, en especial en el seno de nuestra cultura y pueblo hispanos.

### *Summary*

*The themes of the incarnation and of the Nativity have particular relevance for Hispanics when they are seen within the context of the history of a people awaiting the Messiah who would redeem them. More concretely, Mary has an important role to play in Hispanic religiosity, in spite of the danger that this may be overdone.*



## Ethnic Minorities in Ministry: A Prophetic Vision

*Leo D. Nieto*

**T**he established church of today in the United states, exemplified by the United Methodist Church, to which I belong, is comparable to the early church of Jerusalem in a number of ways. We have been organizationally without peers, and we have been a vigorous church in that we have experienced phenomenal growth and development from the time of our founding by John Wesley. Our church has exhibited a contagious vitality that came from a spiritual source. One result is that United Methodist churches (made up of groups of people bound together as mutually supportive communities) can be found in rural areas, in towns and villages and in all of the cities, large and small, of this nation.

Not only have we been a fervent church as was the early Jerusalem church, but we have also been characterized as a church that cares about those in need of the basic essentials for survival, the poor and the needy. So it is that along with local churches in places large and small across the land, we have schools and social agencies that minister to many of the needs of poor and disadvantaged people. We also have agencies that seek to address these basic needs on a world-wide level.

Another way that the church today is similar to the early Jerusalem church is in its ethnic make-up. As the Jerusalem church was made up primarily of Jews, so the United Methodist church is made up primarily of white Anglo-Saxons. It is also true that the church in the United States has made token efforts to reach out to persons of other races, nationalities and cultures, as it was true that the early Jerusalem church reached out to the Ethiopian eunuch through Philip (Acts 8:27-38), and to some Gentiles at least through Peter's dream depicting a sheet dropping down from heaven with many kinds of meat for him to eat. However, it is also still true that the churches in the United States today are essentially made up of, run and administered by, and dominated by whites, in the same way that the early Jerusalem church was essentially made up of Jews.

To illustrate the point a bit further, let us look briefly at the jurisdictional conferences which met in July, 1980, during which some of us as Hispanic United Methodists were hoping and advocating for the election of a first Hispanic bishop. It was clear from the outset that white delegates constituted a preponderant majority in all of the jurisdictions, so that if a Hispanic were to be elected it would only happen as a result of the collective will of the white delegates, there being, **at most** only three or four Hispanic delegates with vote in any of the jurisdictional conferences. It was clearly not the will of the ethnic majority in 1980.

Another way in which I see some comparison between the church in the United States today and the early church in Jerusalem is in the movement of large masses of people primarily because of persecution. The difference in the two situations, however, is that in the early church people were moving out and away from Jerusalem and Palestine to places like Samaria, Caesarea, Damascus, Antioch, Cyprus and beyond, while in our present situation masses of people are coming to this country in a movement from places like Cambodia, Vietnam, the Phillipines, Cuba, Haiti, Chile, El Salvador and Mexico, just to name a few places, and they are coming primarily because of economic and political persecution. Whereas the early Jerusalem Christians were emigrating to escape from the physical persecution of the Jewish-Roman oppressors, so today thousands of basically non-white peoples are immigrating to the United States to escape from their own oppressive situations.

It was through the ministry of St. Paul that the early Christian church grew from a Jerusalem based church made up primarily of Jews to a major spiritual force throughout the Roman empire involving Gentiles of many racial and cultural groups, as well as Jews. As we look now at the task before us as a church seeking ways of ministering to ethnic minorities in the United States, what are some of the lessons we might learn from the Book of Acts?

First, as a church, we need to experience Paul's vision of Jesus Christ as he traveled to Damascus. We need to be knocked to the ground like Paul was, blinded if necessary, shaken to our roots. God wants our attention. Once God has our attention, perhaps he will show us what we need to do next, as Jesus said to Paul, "Go into the city and you will be told what you have to do."



Paul's ministry consisted in developing and organizing new local congregations, primarily among Gentiles. He did this with a boldness that matched, at least, that of the Jerusalem Christians, and he continued in this bold manner in the midst of severe persecution.

A part of the vision that Paul pointed for us is that he ventured out and took risks, such as when he insisted on going to the Gentiles — the first "affirmative action" of the Christian Church. And the results were good. There was growth and expansion as new congregations were established.

There are several principles of organizing that Paul used and that we would do well to emulate as a part of our vision. He was not limited in scope but reached out far and wide and made contacts and established relationships with hundreds and thousands of people throughout Asia, Macedonia and on to Europe. Perhaps we should do the same as we look to developing new congregations among ethnic minorities. Whereas it may be true that, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there will I be also," we should not be content to be limited to small numbers, but seek to reach out to as many as possible of the masses of ethnic minority people who are constantly coming to live in our midst.

After Paul made contacts and helped new people to become related to each other in Christian community, he also returned to meet with these groups, to encourage them, to reprimand them and to consolidate his work. He was constantly training and developing new leaders. Barnabas, Titus and Timothy saw him as their mentor and went on to become primary leaders in the church.

Paul persevered, realizing that it took time to develop new churches. He was three years in Damascus and spent time in many of the places that later became strong churches. There were some places, like Athens, where there was little or no response, but Paul continued to work sacrificially and often in humiliation.

Paul insisted on discipline and did not tolerate sloppiness and irresponsibility in the Lord's work. For example, he refused to allow John Mark to continue to work with Barnabas and himself because he had not been disciplined enough. I dare say that Paul would have taken the same position if John Mark had been a native American, a Black, an Asian or a disadvantaged Chicano United Methodist who grew up in a poor barrio.

St. Paul insisted on the living of a clear, definite Christian morality based on the love of Christ and nothing less, and so in his letters he dealt with the question of authority, with moral delinquency on the part of new Christians, and with party strife and division.

If we learn from Paul's vision and experiences, what will happen to the church in the years that are to follow?

As the Gentiles of the early church came to constitute the majority in the later Christian church, together with the early Jewish Christians, so will the ethnic minorities come to make up the majority in the later church in America together with the early white Christians, all together to constitute again "the real people of God," a revitalized, re-energized, re-sanctified "true Israel," "the whole people of Israel — a divinely called congregation."

The native American "trail of tears" experience, in which we have all participated in one way or another, will be turned into the war cry of a new cosmic Geronimo; the Black slave lament which we have all tried to block out from our hearing in one way or another will be turned into the "I have a dream" of the new Martin Luther King, Jr.; the old retired famililess Filipino farm worker with twisted arms and legs from years of low-paid toil in the fields of California will turn into the new proud and dignified Peter Chens, the Jonah Changs of the church; and the "árboles de la noche triste," the "valles de lágrimas" of the Chicano Southwest will become a new "Grito de Dolores," a new spiritual "Grito de Axtlán" of a land without borders where there will be neither Jew nor Gentile, neither male nor female, no Catholics or Protestants, no more Niggers, Wops, Polocks, Meskin Greasers, Chinks, Changos, wet-backs, Gooks, Gringos, nor Honkies—we shall "all be one so that the world may believe."

The early church moved from being an in-group of Jews to the accepting of out-groups of Gentiles who finally all became the Christian Church. La lucha continúa. It is a time now for moving out again to accepting the outcasts, the unacceptables, and for all of the unacceptables to be let in on the secret that we are accepted—nay, we are "heirs of the Kingdom of God!"

This is the task of the church today. A task not only to be allowed to happen, but one to be grasped, firmly, with boldness. Not a task to be reacted to, but one to be acted



upon as we write together during these coming years a new "Book of the Acts of the Ethnically Inclusive Church."

## Resumen

*Hay una serie de paralelos entre la iglesia de hoy y la primitiva iglesia cristiana, tal como se le ve en Hechos. Esos paralelos nos hacen ver que la tarea de la iglesia de hoy consiste en abrirse genuinamente a todos los grupos minoritarios. Aunque la iglesia se muestra renuente a esto, solamente de ese modo puede ser verdaderamente la heredera de la comunidad original.*

## Reseña bibliográfica

*Zan Holmes*

**Liberation Preaching: The Pulpit and the Oppressed.** Justo L. González and Catherine Gunsalus González. Ed. William D. Thompson. Abingdon, 1980. 113 pages. \$4.95.

**L**iberation Preaching by Justo L. and Catherine G. González is a most challenging and much needed addition to the vast number of publications in the field of preaching today. Unlike many of these publications which are mainly "how to" manuals on sermon construction, this is a book on preaching which admittedly and very intentionally is grounded in liberation theology. As such it invites its readers to explore a non-traditional approach to homiletics, hermeneutics, worship, evangelism, and every other area of the church's life and ministry.

Although written from "the perspective of those who have been traditionally powerless in society and voiceless in the church," the book is a clear and convincing call for the oppressed and oppressors alike to be involved in the process of liberation through preaching.

The authors begin their task in Chapter One by providing what I consider to be one of the best and clearest brief



introductions to liberation theology available. This is confirmed by many of my students in preaching who are required to read the book!

Liberation theology is defined as theology that is "done from the perspective of the traditionally powerless as they experience the empowerment of the gospel, not only in an inner sense, but also in the sense that it compels and enables them to strive for justice" (p. 13). The "traditionally powerless" in the United States include Blacks, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. In Latin America, Asia, and Africa, the powerless are those who have been the subjects of economic, political, and ecclesiastical colonialism. Also included in some societies are the aged; and in all societies women are included.

Chapters two, three, and four affirm an underlying assumption of the Gonzalezes that liberation preaching is primarily biblical preaching, and therefore biblically based. However, in their view, liberation preaching is biblical preaching which rejects the traditional understanding and practice of biblical interpretation and affirms the re-interpretation of the biblical text from a different perspective—that of the powerless.

The case which the writers make against traditional biblical exegesis is up front and to the point! A recurring notion throughout their argument is that of "ideological suspicion," a questioning and magnifying of traditional biblical interpretation in order to uncover the hidden oppressive overtones and free up the text. Juan Luis Segundo's "Hermeneutic Circle" is the proposed process by which that is done.

Especially helpful to the liberation preacher are the five pointers on Biblical interpretation which are given in Chapter Four. In summary they are: 1) Ask the political question of the text. For example, who in the text represents the powerful and who represents the powerless. 2) Reassign the cast of characters. For example, try on all the characters for size, including those who are unpopular. 3) Imagine a different setting for reading the text. For example, imagine reading it to a poor congregation instead of an affluent congregation. 4) Consider the direction of the action. In other words, which way is God moving in the text? 5) Avoid avoidance. Here the Gonzalezes issue an especially important warning against the avoidance of texts with obvious liberation themes, the danger of over-emphasizing a small section of the text at the expense



of the rest of it, and the fallacy of "spiritualizing" a text to the neglect of its social and historical implications.

In the final two chapters Drs. Gonzalez offer a final caution and charge to those who accept the call to liberation preaching. The caution is a reminder that liberation preaching involves risk taking which requires the preacher to develop an awareness for oppressed peoples, and become actively involved in their liberation struggle. "There can be no liberation preaching without actual involvement in the process of liberation" (p. 108). Some who are primarily identified with the "traditionally powerful" may hear these as words of exclusion. However, the authors' main point is that liberation preaching can never take place until the cause of liberation from oppression becomes personal and of vital concern for the preacher.

The final charge is that liberation from oppression is the work of the Kingdom of God. It is a never ending journey-process that the preacher is called to travel till the Kingdom comes. And since there is but one oppression binding us all together and one Liberation liberating our lives, hopefully we will find the journey freeing for the oppressor as well as the oppressed.

One obvious limitation of the book is the absence of a section which provides some examples of sermon development beyond the text. Given the size and format of the book, however, it was probably best for the authors to deal with the primary task of biblical exegesis and interpretation.

In regard to the above mentioned limitation, I am pleased to note the Justo González has recently edited a book of sermons from the perspective of liberation theology. Entitled **Proclaiming the Acceptable Year** (Judson Press), it serves as an appropriate sequel to **Liberation Preaching**. I highly recommend it for preachers who want to continue the journey started here.

As I noted earlier, **Liberation Preaching** is required reading for the introductory preaching classes I teach at Perkins. I also use it as a basic text in a preaching seminar entitled "Preaching on Liberation Themes." Although some of my students find it afflicting at their point of comfort, the overwhelming majority agree that it is one of the most challenging and rewarding books on preaching today. I also agree! I invite the whole church to read and "hear" the word contained in this book!

